



Colorado
State
University



CICEP

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY UNIVERSITIES
AWARDS PROGRAM

CASE
STUDY
2016

IEP CATEGORY • PLACE
**School of Global
Sustainability**

SCHOOL OF GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

CSU's [School of Global Environmental Sustainability](#) (SoGES) sits at the nexus of a growing number of exciting sustainability initiatives in research, education and engagement at CSU. SoGES is a Special Academic Unit attached to the Office of the Provost, established to enable the nimble, on-demand construction of curriculum across multiple departments to serve learner and end-user interests. It defines environmental sustainability broadly as humans coexisting with the natural world on a planet with finite resources. The School was designed to apply interdisciplinary perspectives to large-scale environmental, economic, and social questions not easily addressed through traditional approaches, including 21st century challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change and food security.



Founded by University Distinguished Professor Diana Wall in 2008, SoGES serves as a hub to connect CSU's community of scholars and practitioners across disciplines and colleges, building on the university's history of leadership in environmental science and education by integrating sustainability studies with the sciences, humanities, arts, and business. The School works actively at the intersection of Innovation, Talent and Place by supporting faculty in the development of new research and curricula, mentoring early career scientists, teaching students, and fostering ongoing dialogue about sustainability issues with [a multitude of stakeholders from the academic, public, and private sectors](#).

Place

SoGES' educational mission extends to local and global communities to promote broader literacy and advocacy in environmental sustainability. The School informs and engages stakeholders through an extensive number and diversity of events, unique engagement programs and an active and dynamic online presence.

In 2014-15, [SoGES hosted or co-hosted 112 public or School events attracting almost 4,400 attendees](#). Locally, the School's "Managing the Planet" monthly interactive panel discussions featuring CSU faculty have been popular with the public since 2010 due to strong community interest in sustainability. The monthly Dining with Sustainability series convenes research and managers across the region to network and inspire research, enterprise and partnerships. With the help of over 100 faculty and research scientists at CSU, [the Africa Center](#) was established in 2014 as a platform for the university to work with remote partners and community members toward sustainable African ecosystems and societies. Undergraduate and graduate students are afforded diverse opportunities to learn and serve in Africa as part of faculty programs. Additionally, the School works closely with an external advisory board to ensure alignment with global priorities.

The board includes professors from six elite research institutions, nonprofit The Climate Reality Project, and local corporate sustainability leader New Belgium Brewery.

Talent

SoGES provides innovative and challenging education programs to equip learners with the principles and practices of sustaining the environment and meet the workforce demands of the green economy. The School directly oversees innovative interdisciplinary curricula with this focus, in addition to promoting the integration of sustainability concepts into courses across campus. As a result, 37% of the 2,633 courses taught at CSU include a sustainability component.

In 2015-16, 45 different majors across all eight colleges were represented in the Global Environmental Sustainability (GES) minor, a 21-credit sequence allowing students to tailor coursework to augment their interests. An alternate minor option exists specific to water management, leveraging this long held expertise at the university. Advanced Ph.D. students and early career postdoctoral fellows at CSU are eligible to participate in the School's Sustainability Leadership Fellows program, designed to help future innovators and leaders in sustainability science translate their science for the media and the public. The incoming cohort includes 20 fellows from 14 departments across five colleges. Beyond enhanced communication and leadership skills, participants have gained an interdisciplinary network of colleagues, as well as new perspectives on how their work can have an impact. The scope of SoGES curricula broadens beyond the traditional on-campus population, including an eight-day experiential Summer Sustainability Program for pre-college students and an Integrated Sustainability Management online certificate program for industry professionals.

Innovation

“Our goal is to support researchers that are interested in taking their work to the next level. “We don’t micromanage them at all and we keep the reporting requirements low in order to keep the creativity and ingenuity high. These teams often go on to win larger grants and support, but first they need to get in the intellectual sandbox, if you will, and explore whether their concepts will gel. That’s a niche we are providing to help incentivize innovative work at the University to address these big sustainability challenges.” Diana Wall, SoGES Director

The School has provided seed funding to 30 Global Challenges Research Teams to date, fostering creative and innovative approaches to sustainability grand challenges and establishing interdisciplinary research in new areas and with expanded applicability. To strategically address CSU's research strengths, the School has six areas of focus for research endeavors, organizing sustainability-related activity occurring across 90% of CSU departments:

- Climate Change and Energy
- Food Security
- Environmental Institutions and Governance
- Sustainable Communities
- Land and Water Resources
- Biodiversity, Conservation, and Management

SoGES sponsors a Resident Fellows program to accelerate progress in these focal areas from a diverse range of perspectives. In 2015, a fellowship was awarded to a professor in the CSU's Department of Art and Art History who promotes public awareness of sustainability issues through art.

CSU's research leadership in sustainability is not limited to faculty. SoGES' Student Sustainability Center, a student-run organization dedicated to empowering students to engage in sustainability activities and innovation, initiated the CSU Nitrogen Footprint Project in 2014. The research project is part of a multicampus effort by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reduce nitrogen output at institutions across the country. Through its unique expertise in linking social and environmental sciences, CSU is recognized as a major player in the rapidly developing field of sustainability science. The university partners with the University of Colorado Boulder to form one of four global hubs for the Secretariat of Future Earth, an ambitious 10-year international scientific initiative supported by the National Science Foundation to address crucial environmental change and solutions around the world.